



KING HENRY THE EIGHTH

(From the original of Holbein)

The LOVE LETTERS of HENRY *the* EIGHTH

TO ANNE BOLEYN: AND TWO LETTERS FROM ANNE BOLEYN
TO CARDINAL WOLSEY: WITH HER LAST LETTER TO
HENRY THE EIGHTH, AND THE KING'S LOVE-
LETTER TO JANE SEYMOUR

REPRINTED FROM THE HARLEIAN MISCELLANY
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

LADBROKE BLACK

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To
CHARLES LAUGHTON
whose genius has given us the first
HUMAN HENRY

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THE REAL HENRY VIII

It is a commonplace of experience that death and distance change completely the portrait of a man whom we knew when he was alive. We rub our eyes with astonishment when we read the obituary notice of a friend of whose private life we have an intimate knowledge. His carefully listed domestic virtues surprise us who recall, perhaps, certain nights dedicated to Bacchus, amorous week-ends and a taste for Rabelasian anecdote. When, later, the debunking process, so inevitable nowadays, commences—the emphasising of his vices and the neglect of his virtues—the real man we knew becomes blurred and indistinct, and we find ourselves accepting as authentic, according to our mood, the one picture of him or the other.

If this is true of ordinary men, how much harder must it be to obtain a real portrait of those who have occupied the centre of the human stage during their life-times, strutted their hour in the glare of the limes, and become the focus of conflicting passions and interests? No one, probably, has suffered more from this habit of distortion than Henry VIII. It was his misfortune not only to occupy a foremost place in a religious controversy which rent Christendom, but to have lived a particularly full and tragic domestic life under the close inspection of the world at large. Even his love letters to Anne Boleyn were “acquired” by his religious opponents, probably with a view to propaganda purposes, and are to be seen to this day in the Vatican Library. His every action was twisted to help a cause and his lightest reported word was made to serve partisan interests. No wonder it has become hard to see the man as he really was.

Until recently there have been two distinct portraits of Henry VIII. In certain particulars they agree. It is common ground that when he came to the throne at the age of eighteen, in 1509, his mental and physical qualities were of a high

order. All that was best in his ancestors was repeated in his person. Like his grandfather, King Edward IV, who was the handsomest man in Europe of his age, he was tall, and from his grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville, he received his good looks. He was a lover of all manly exercises. During his progresses through the country he occupied himself every day in shooting, dancing, wrestling, casting the bar, playing on the recorders, the flute, the virginals, or writing songs and ballads and setting them to music. His love of learning and of the fine arts was a joint legacy from his father and his grandmother, Margaret, Countess of Richmond. In his appetites he fulfilled very accurately Froude's famous description of the English of those times—"A sturdy high-hearted race, sound in body and fierce in spirit which, under the stimulus of those great shins of beef, their common diet, were the wonder of the age." Like all the Tudors, he was masterful and overbearing, hating to be balked in the gratification of his slightest whim, and uncontrollable when his passions were aroused.

That is the background which will be found in all the portraits of Henry VIII. But under the brushes of the rival schools of artists, two diametrically opposed pictures emerge. In the one he is depicted, not as an inconstant husband with a rough and ready method of ridding himself of a wife who was an encumbrance, but merely as a man who was singularly unfortunate in his matrimonial alliances.

Had he not been forced at an early age into an incestuous marriage with his deceased brother's wife, Catherine of Arragon, and did he not naturally set her aside when the passage of time had matured his moral and spiritual intelligence? Anne Boleyn whom he next took to his bed was a woman wholly given over to vice and utterly unworthy of his great love. What other course had he except to send her to the block and marry Jane Seymour within ten days? Unfortunately this good wife died in giving birth to the

prince who afterwards became Edward VI. His fourth wife was foisted upon him by the great but mistaken Thomas Cromwell, who, seven months after the marriage with Anne of Cleves, paid with his head for his attempt to make marital love play a part in his international intrigues. The sight of the unfortunate Anne created such a disgust in the bosom of Henry that he allowed Parliament to divorce him on the grounds that the union was extorted by external circumstances. Katherine Howard, the fifth wife, was sent to the block on the same charges as had been brought against her cousin Anne Boleyn, and Henry at last found a haven of connubial rest and felicity in the person of Katherine Parr, who healed the wounds of his much-tortured heart, and possibly restored his badly shattered faith in the constancy of women.

That is one picture. In the other, Henry figures as Bluebeard. The young man who had come to the throne brimful of strong, healthy animal spirits with a love of intellectual pursuits, became in middle age a worn-out, impotent old man with a mind so blinded by passion and bigotry that he was tottering on the verge of insanity. There was nothing of the early Henry in the brutalised, monomaniac of the latter days except the tyrannical spirit. His intellectual gifts had developed into mere vulgar superstition ; his splendid manhood had dissolved into premature decay. Vanity alone dictated his state-craft, and he punctuated the changes in his foreign policy with the heads of his ministers and sealed his European intrigues with the divorces of his wives. Religion, for him, was merely a cloak for his lust, and as wife after wife palled upon him, he sought a new mistress, disguising the gratification of his carnal desires by the mockery of a marriage.

In one of the letters printed in this book, he complains that he has given himself a head-ache from writing for four hours, with copious extracts from the Bible, his defence of

his divorce from his first wife, and concludes the letter with expressions of amorous longings for his correspondent, the unfortunate Anne Boleyn. Direct hints that he might be incapable of producing children, and that therefore his marriages, as gestures of state-craft, were futile, drove him into outbursts of passion. When Chapuys suggested as much about his marriage with Anne Boleyn, he turned upon him furiously declaring, “*Am I not a man? Am I not a man like others?*”

What is the truth? Which is the real picture? Mr. Charles Laughton, the great artist of the stage and screen, to whom this volume is dedicated, has given us a representation which differs from both. By his genius he has created a Henry who is an understandable man, who is neither a rather sloppy cuckold, nor a blood-stained Bluebeard. As in the case of the other two pictures the background is the same, but from it emerges not only a king who was wiser than his ministers, but a human being who, in spite of his many faults, is a lovable, and in one sense a pathetic character. This Henry is simply a man who longs for connubial bliss. Fate, the glamour of his regal position, feminine vanity and weakness, make this desire unattainable. Not even when he comes to anchor at last with Katherine Parr is his ideal realised. The union for which he had longed has, he finds, its drawbacks, and the Tudor tyrant meets a domestic despot who rules him with a rod of iron.

There is something gloriously Gargantuan which strikes a human note of reality in Henry with his avid appetites and deplorable table manners. There is an air of truth in the Henry of fifty-two seeking to recall the glorious athletic feats of his splendid youth by engaging in a wrestling match to impress his beautiful and unfaithful fifth wife, Katherine Howard. And when having boasted that he is the best card player in the Kingdom, he loses all his jewels to Anne of Cleves, his fury and outraged vanity, until he discovers that

Anne has cheated, are emotions which we all recognise as perfectly in keeping with an authentic personality.

In painting the picture of a king, the artist is liable to lose sight of the man amidst the regal trimmings. As a model, Henry suffered a great deal in this respect, for not only was he for all practical purposes the autocratic ruler of the state, but to this temporal authority had been added for the first time that of Supreme Head of the Church within his dominions. These combined powers caused him to be regarded by those who made no contact with him, either as the gallant defender of the true faith, or a blasphemous heretic. But the homely nick-name that a man acquires is sometimes a better guide to his personality than the archives of history. Among his subjects he was known affectionately as "bluff King Hal," and this really is the personality which has made him one of the most interesting figures in English history.

A curious sidelight on the character of Henry is shown by his post-marital relations with his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves.

As a matter of historical fact, Henry and Anne of Cleves, once their formal marriage had been annulled, became the best of friends. He visited her frequently at Richmond, and treated her as one on whose disinterested regard he could always rely. Marillac, the French ambassador, made this relationship the subject of comment in one of his dispatches, showing the intimate companionship which existed between Henry and Anne. "The King," he wrote, "is ten miles off at Hampton Court, thinly attended, and has been lately at Richmond to visit the Queen that was. He is on the best possible terms with her, and they sup so pleasantly together that some thought she was to be restored to her place."

In the following pages Henry's seventeen love letters to Anne Boleyn are reproduced together with the original introduction from the Harleian Miscellany, two letters from

Anne Boleyn to Cardinal Wolsey bearing on her marriage, her last pathetic letter to Henry VIII before she went to the block, and a letter to Jane Seymour, from Henry, written while Anne Boleyn was still his wife. Perhaps these letters, besides being of definite historical interest, may help our readers to arrive at a true picture of Henry VIII for themselves.

LADBROKE BLACK.

A Song of CONSTANCY

Written by Henry VIII

Grene grouch the holy, so doth the ivie
Thow winter's blastys blow never so hye.
As the holy grouch grene and never chaungyth hew
So I am—ever hath bene—unto my lady trew

Grene grouch, etc.

As the holy grouch grene with ivie all alone
Whose flowerys cannot be seen and grene wode levys be
gone,

Now unto my lady, promyse to her I make
From all other only to her I me betake.
Adew myne owne lady, adew my specyall
Who hath my hart trewly, be sure, and ever shall.

Grene grouch, etc.

The Wives of HENRY VIII

CATHERINE OF ARRAGON

M. Dec. 26th, 1503; divorced 1533.

ANNE BOLEYN

M. Jan. 1533; executed 1536.

JANE SEYMOUR

M. 1536; died, 1537.

ANNE OF CLEVES

M. Jan. 6th, 1540; divorced, June, 1540.

KATHERINE HOWARD

M. 1540; executed 1542.

KATHERINE PARR

M. 1543; survived her husband, who died in 1547 at the age of 56.

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION



As these letters, with a few reflections on them, may give those that have not leisure to turn over large volumes, just notions of the grounds of King Henry the Eighth's divorce, and arm them against the calumnies of the papists on that subject, I shall give you a faithful copy of them from the originals, now preserved in the Vatican library where they are usually shewn to all strangers, and a true translation of those that were written in French, introducing them with a short view of the most remarkable transactions which preceded, and gave occasion to them. To which end, it may first be observed that, in King Henry the Seventh's time, his eldest son, Prince Arthur, being¹ past fifteen years of age, was married to the Princess Catherine of Spain, who was elder than himself; that they lived together as man and wife for several months, and then, Prince Arthur dying,² it was resolved, for reasons of state, that Prince Henry should marry his brother's widow. This was opposed by Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, as absolutely unlawful, but advised by Fox, bishop of Winchester, who thought all difficulties would be removed by a dispensation, from Rome; accordingly a bull was obtained³ to that effect, and they were married, the prince being yet under age. But Wareham had so possessed the king with scruples against this marriage, that, the day⁴ on which the prince was of age, he, by his father's order, protested against it, as null and void; and Henry the Seventh, with his dying breath, persisted in charging his son to break it off intirely. However, when Henry the Eighth came to the crown, it was resolved in council, that he should renew his marriage; which was done⁵ publickly, and he had several children by the queen, who all died young, except the Lady Mary.⁶

After this there appeared no farther disquiet in the king's mind, nor any sign of an intended divorce, till the year 1524, when Cardinal Wolsey, by his legantine mandate, published a bull of the pope's against those that contracted marriage within the forbidden degrees. This mandate is yet extant in the register of

¹ November 14, 1501.

⁴ June 22, 1505.

² April 2, 1502.

⁵ June 3, 1509.

³ December 26, 1503.

⁶ Afterwards Queen of England.

Fisher, bishop of Rochester. What followed makes this justly suspected to have been done, on the king's account. To confirm which suspicion, there is a concurring circumstance, in a letter from Simon Grineus to Brucer, dated September 10, 1531, where he says, The king had declared to him, that he had abstained from Queen Catherine, for seven years, upon scruples of conscience.

However, though the king had scruples at that time, yet he concealed them carefully from the world for some years; and the immediate occasion of their breaking out seems to have been given by the French ambassadors, who came¹ to England to treat of several matters, and particularly of a marriage between the Princess Mary and the French king, or the duke of Orleans, his second son. This alternative was at last agreed,² though it remained sometime in suspense, because the president of the parliament of Paris doubted, whether the marriage between the king and her mother, being his brother's wife, were good or no. The bishop of Tarbe made the same objection, and renewed it to the king's ambassadors in France, as appears by King Henry's speech to the mayor and citizens of London, concerning his scruples, where he says, When our ambassadors were last in France, and motion was made that the duke of Orleans should marry our said daughter, one of the chief counsellors to the French king said, It were well done to know whether she be the king of England's lawful daughter, or not; for well known it is, that he begat her on his brother's wife, which is directly contrary to God's law, and his precept. That this counsellor was the Bishop of Tarbe, is affirmed by the bishop of Bayonne, in the account he gives of this speech to the court of France, in a letter dated the 27th of November, 1528; yet this very bishop of Tarbe was afterwards advanced to be a cardinal, and was so far from retracting his opinion, that, when he was cardinal of Grandemont, in a letter dated the 27th of March, 1530, he writes to the French court, That he had served the Lord Rochford (Anne Boleyn's father) all he could, and that the pope had three several times said to him in secret, that he wished the marriage had been already made in England, either by the legate's dispensation, or otherwise; provided it was not done by him, nor in diminution of his authority,

¹ March 2, 1527.

² April 30, 1527.

under pretence of the laws of God. The conduct shews, that it was not religion, but political views, that turned the court of Rome against the king's cause, which they at first plainly favoured. And

Now as to the arguments by which the king fortified himself in these scruples. These, as he himself owned, were, that he found by the law of Moses, If a man took his brother's wife, they should die childless ; this made him reflect on the death of his children, which he now looked on as a curse from God, for that unlawful marriage. He found Thomas Aquinas (whom he chiefly valued of all the casuists) of opinion, That the laws of Leviticus, about the forbidden degrees of marriage, were moral and eternal, such as obliged all christians ; and that the pope could only dispense with the laws of the church, but not with the laws of God ; and, when the validity of the marriage came afterwards to be thoroughly canvassed, it appeared that the whole tradition of the church and the opinions of its doctors were against the marriage.

In the year 1527, before Cardinal Wolsey's journey to France, which he began on the 3rd of July, to promote the King's marriage with the duchess of Alenson, the king's scruples were become publick, as two writers¹ testify almost in the same words : This season, says Hall, began a fame in London, that the king's confessor, the bishop of Lincoln, called Dr. Langland, and divers other great clerks, had told the king, that the marriage between him and the Lady Catherine, late wife to his brother, Prince Arthur, was not good, but damnable.

And this suspicion, of the cardinal's going to promote a second match in France, is confirmed² by a letter of his, dated Feversham, July the 5th, 1527, where he says, Archbishop Warham had warned him of the great jealousies which Queen Catherine had of his journey. And by another letter, dated August the 1st, 1527, where he labours to satisfy the king, that the pope's dispensation was in itself null and void. All these particulars will be the stronger proofs of the cardinal's intention, when it shall be proved that the cardinal could then have no thoughts of Anne Boleyn, whose father, the Lord Rochford, came over to England from France with the duchess of Alenson's picture to shew it to King Henry ; and it

¹ Stow, Hall.

² Herbert.

was then, in all probability, that Anne Boleyn came over with him ; for, though she had been in England in 1522, yet she did not stay long but returned into the service of Claude, queen of France, where she continued till that queen died, which was in 1524, and then went into the duchess of Alenson's service, which she left probably at this time. Soon after her coming into England, she was taken into Queen Catherine's court, where the Lord Piercy courted her, and was upon the point of marrying her had not Cardinal Wolsey, by the king's order, prevented it ; and, as the same author assures us, it was not till after the cardinal's return from France, which was on the last day of September, 1527, that the king opened his affection for Anne Boleyn to him.

Why then do the papists pretend to say, that the king would never have had thoughts of a divorce, or scruples against his first marriage, had not his unlawful passion for Mrs. Boleyn prompted him to them ? Whereas it is plainly proved that the king's scruples were infused in him from his infancy, on the justest grounds ; that they were revived in him three years before they were made public, and that they were commonly talked of, and a new match contrived for him to the duchess of Alenson, before Anne Boleyn appeared at court. All which will still appear more clearly in the ensuing letters. But, before I make any remarks on these, I must first give a short account of the king's negotiations at Rome, without which some of them cannot be understood. In the end of 1527, the king solicited the pope for a commission to judge the validity of his marriage with Queen Catherine, which after some time was obtained in a bull, dated the 13th of April, 1528, empowering Cardinal Wolsey, with the archbishop, or any other English bishop to judge the marriage. But this was not made use of ; perhaps because it was thought that a stranger ought to be employed, that the proceeding might be more impartial. So a new commission was desired, and obtained, bearing date the 6th of June, in which the cardinals Wolsey and Campegio (an Italian) were appointed joint legates to judge the marriage.

And, to make this the surer, there was a pollicitation (or promise) procured on the 23rd of July, 1528, That the pope would never inhibit or revoke this commission to judge the marriage ; and a decretal bull, which contained an absolute decision of the cause,

which was only shewn to the king, and cardinal Wolsey, by Campegio ; but all these precautions which were admitted of, when the pope was in a distressed condition, did not restrain his holiness from sending one Campana before the end of the year, to see the decretal bull secretly burnt ; and from recalling the legate's commission, and avocating the cause to Rome the next year, when his affairs were more flourishing, and the emperor (who was Queen Catherine's nephew) had granted all his demands.

Now as to the letters themselves. It may be presumed reasonably, that, if there had been anything in them that had reflected on the king's honour, or on Anne Boleyn's, they would certainly have been published by the papists at that very time ; for they were in their hands soon after they were written, as appears from this passage in Lord Herbert's History.

' When Cardinal Campegio came to take ship, the searchers, ' upon pretence he carried either money or letters from England ' to Rome, ransacked all his coffers, bags, and papers, not without ' hope, certainly, to recover that decretal bull our king so much ' longed for. I find also (some relation) that divers love-letters ' between our king and Mistress Boleyn, being conveyed out of ' the king's cabinet, were sought for, though in vain ; they having ' been formerly sent to Rome.'

To explain this account, it must be supposed, that they were taken, not out of the king's, but out of Anne Boleyn's cabinet ; this is the more probable, because, in fact, they are all letters from the king to her ; whereas, if his cabinet had been rifled, her answers to him would have been more likely to be found there.

As to the time in which the king's letters to Anne Boleyn were written, in all probability, it was immediately after her dismission from the court,¹ which was done to silence the clamours of the people on her account ; but she was sent away in so abrupt a manner, that she determined to absent herself altogether ; which made the king soon repent of his severity, and press her to come back ; but this was not obtained for a long time, nor without great difficulty ; as appears by some of the following letters. The time of her dismission was not till May, 1528, for there is a letter extant² from Fox to Gardiner, at Rome, dated London, May the 4th,

¹ Herbert.

² Lately in the Earl of Oxford's library, 39, B4.

1528, where he writes, Of his landing at Sandwich, May the 2nd,—His coming that night to Greenwich, where the king lay,—His being commanded to go to Mistress Anne's chamber in the Tilt-yard—And declaring to her their expedition in the king's cause, and their hastening the coming of the legate—To her great rejoicing and comfort—Then came the king, to whom he delivered his letters,—and opened his negotiations—Then he went to the cardinal, etc.

Soon after the date of this letter she was dismissed; for, in the first of the letters that follow, the king makes excuses for the necessity of their being asunder; and, in the second complains of her unwillingness to return to court. In neither of these is a word of the sweating sickness, which raged violently in June; and, of which he speaks in his third letter, as of a thing that had lasted some time, and, of which, he had formed many observations from experience. Between this letter, which seems to have been writ in July, and the sixth, which, mentioning the legate's arrival at Paris, must have been written in the end of September, there are two letters, which, by the earnestness of the business, were plainly written within a few days of one another. Probably, soon after the latter¹ of these were sent by the king, where he expressed how much he was pleased with her answer to his earnest desire in the former,² in the heat of his gratitude, he paid a visit to his mistress, in which time they wrote a joint letter to Cardinal Wolsey, which is added in the appendix, where the king expresses his wonder, that he has not yet heard of the legate Campegio's arrival at Paris; which makes it probable this happened in September. The king stayed not long with her after this; for, when she had received the cardinal's answer, she writes a second letter, without mentioning the king's being there; and, again shews impatience to hear of the legate's coming, of which, the king gave her the first news soon after. But,

To return to the fourth letter, which from all these particulars may be supposed to have been written in August; it is the most important in all the collection, for it fixes the time when his affection to Anne Boleyn began. He complains in it, That he had been above a whole year struck with the dart of love, and not yet sure whether

¹ Letter the fifth.

² Letter the fourth.

he shall fail, or find a place in her heart or affection. Now, by the nature of his complaint, it is visible, that he pleads all the merits that a long attendance could give him, and, therefore, if, instead of a year, he should have called it a year and a half, or two years, he would certainly have done it to make his argument the stronger. It may likewise be probably concluded from the same words, that he had not then known her much above half a year ; for it would have been an ill compliment in him, to let her understand that he had seen her some time, before he was at all in love with her.

These remarks confirm the account already given, of her coming from France with her father, and, by that means, serve to establish the king's vindication from the scandal thrown on him by the papists, that he had no scruples about his marriage, till he saw Anne Boleyn.

Though it may be here questioned, how the time of any particular letter can be known, since they have no date, and therefore may have been put out of their order. But those, that will read them with any attention, will find a chain of circumstances referred to that plainly show they were laid together by one that knew the order in which they were written, very likely by Anne Boleyn herself ; and whoever stole them, as he took them all together, so would be careful no doubt, to keep them in the order he found them in, that the discoveries to be made from them might be the more complete.

It will not be doubted by any that read these letters, that the king's affection to Anne Boleyn was altogether upon honourable terms. There appears no pretension to any favours, but when the legates shall have paved the way. There is but one offence that can be taken at these letters, which is, that there are indecent expressions in them. But this is to be imputed to the simplicity and unpoliteness of that age which allowed too great liberties of that sort ; and it must be owned by his enemies, that there are but three or four of these sallies in all the collection, and that there are letters that make much more for the king's piety and virtue, than those irregularities can sully his character.

In the fifth letter he tells her, God can do it, if he pleases ; to whom I pray once a day for that end, and hope, that, at length, my prayers will be heard.

In the sixth, I trust shortly to enjoy, what I have so longed for, to God's pleasure, and our both comforts.

In the ninth, praying God, that (and it be His pleasure), to send us shortly togydder. Surely these religious expressions would have been very improper, to make an unlawful passion succeed.

In the thirteenth, speaking of the ill character of one that was proposed to be made abbess of Wilton, he writes, I would not, for all the gold in the world, clog your conscience nor mine, to make her ruler of a house which is of so ungodly demeanour ; nor I trust you would not, that, neither for brother nor sister, I should so destrain mine honour or conscience. The whole letter is of an excellent strain, and would have been a very improper exhortation to one against whose virtue he had a design.

The last of the letters mentions the legate's illness as a reason why he had not yet entered upon his office ; which shews that the correspondence ended at least in May 1529 when the process began.

There is but one thing after the letters, that it seems very material to add here in the king's defence and that is, the approbation of his cause by the learned men of Europe.

During the trial, Warham and Fisher, who were the advocates for the queen, declared, That they having been lately consulted by the king, etc., had answered, that the king's conscience was disturbed and shaken, not without the weightiest and strongest reasons.¹

After the legates had trifled some months, and at last, Campegio, under a pretence of the rules of the court of Rome, had adjourned the court for three months ; during which time he obtained an avocation from the pope ; the king was advised by Cranmer, not to depend longer on the decisions of the see of Rome, but to consult the several universities of Europe, as well as his own, about the validity of his marriage.

One Crook was employed in this negotiation, and he obtained the opinion of almost all the universities² whither he went, for the nullity of the marriage ; yet he complains in his letters that he was in great straits from the small allowance he had. And, in an original bill of his accounts it appears that he never gave above

¹ See Hist. Reform, Part I.

² Rhymer, Tom. XIV.

To face page Twenty-five



ANNE BOLEYN

(From the original of Holbein)

a few crowns to any that writ on the king's side ; whereas the emperor gave a benefice of five hundred ducates to one, and of six hundred crowns to another, that writ for the queen. Yet, though on the one side men were poorly paid for their trouble, and on the other richly rewarded, yet the most eminent men were universally for the king.

It may here be added that Erasmus, whose name was in the greatest esteem at that time, though he could not be prevailed with to write for the king, for fear of the pope and the emperor, in whose dominions he lived ; yet he went so far as to give great encomiums of the worth and virtues of Sir Thomas Boleyn, then earl of Wiltshire, in his book, *De Preparatione ad Mortem*, which he dedicates to him ; and this was all the approbation that his circumstances made it convenient for him to shew of the king's cause.

On this general consent of the learned in his favour, the king was told he might proceed to a second marriage, the first being of itself null and void ; and, accordingly, he married Anne Boleyn, the twenty-fifth of January, 1533.¹

¹ Hist. Reform, Part III.

*Letters written by HENRY VIII
to ANNE BOLEYN*

LETTER I I I I I

My mistress and friend, I and my heart put ourselves in your hands, begging you to recommend us to your favour, and not to let absence lessen your affection to us. For it were a great pity to increase our pain, which absence alone does sufficiently, and more than I could ever have thought; bringing to my mind a point of astronomy, which is, That the farther the Moors are from us, the farther too is the sun, and yet his heat is the more scorching; so it is with our love, we are at a distance from one another, and yet it keeps its fervency, at least on my side. I hope the like on your part, assuring you that the uneasiness of absence is already too severe for me; and when I think of the continuance of that which I must of necessity suffer, it would seem intolerable to me, were it not for the firm hope I have of your unchangeable affection for me; and now, to put you sometimes in mind of it, and seeing I cannot be present in person with you, I send you the nearest thing to that possible, that is, my picture set in bracelets, with the whole device, which you know already, wishing myself in their place, when it shall please you. This from the hand of

Your servant and friend

H. Rex

LETTER II

To MY MISTRESS

Because the time seems to me very long, since I have heard from you, or concerning your health ; the great affection I have for you has obliged me to send this bearer to be better informed, both of your health and pleasure, particularly because, since my last parting with you, I have been told, that you have intirely changed the opinion in which I left you, and that you would neither come to court with your mother, nor any other way ; which report, if true, I cannot enough wonder at, being persuaded in my own mind, that I have never committed any offence against you ; and it seems a very small return for the great love I bear you, to be kept at a distance from the person and presence of a woman in the world that I value the most ; and, if you love me with as much affection as I hope you do, I am sure, the distance of our two persons would be a little uneasy to you. Though this does not belong so much to the mistress as the servant. Consider well, my mistress, how greatly your absence grieves me ; I hope it is not your will that it should be so ; but, if I heard for certain, that you yourself desired it, I could do no other than complain of my ill fortune, and by degrees abate my great folly ; and so, for want of time, I make an end of my rude letter, desiring you to give credit to this bearer in all he will tell you from me. Written by the hand of your intire servant.

LETTER III

The uneasiness, my doubts about your health gave me, disturbed and frightened me extremely, and I should not have had any quiet without hearing a certain account. But now since you have yet felt nothing, I hope it is with you as with us ; for when we were at Walton, two ushers, two valets de chambre, and your brother, master-treasurer, fell ill, and are now quite well ; and since we have returned to your house at Hondson, we have been perfectly well, God be praised, and have not, at present, one sick person in the family ; and, I think, if you would retire from the Surrey side, as we did, you would escape all danger. There is another thing that may comfort you, which is, that in truth in this distemper few or no women have been taken ill, and besides, no person of our court, and few elsewhere have died of it. For which reasons I beg of you, my intirely beloved, not to frighten yourself, nor to be too uneasy at our absence. For, wherever I am, I am yours, and yet we must sometimes submit to our misfortunes, for, whoever will struggle against fate, is generally but so much the farther from gaining his end ; wherefore, comfort yourself, and take courage, and make this misfortune as easy to you as you can, and I hope shortly to make you sing for joy of your recall. No more at present for lack of time, but that I wish you in my arms, that I might a little dispel your unreasonable thoughts. Written by the hand of him, who is, and always will be yours.

My, H. Rex, Lovely

LETTER IV

By turning over in my thoughts the contents of your last letters, I have put myself into a great agony, not knowing how to understand them, whether to my disadvantage as I understand them, whether to my disadvantage as I understood some others, or not; I beseech you now, with the greatest earnestness, to let me know your whole intention, as to the love between us two. For I must of necessity obtain this answer of you, having been above a whole year struck with the dart of love, and not yet sure whether I shall fail, or find a place in your heart and affection. This uncertainty has hindered me of late from naming you my mistress, since you only love me with an ordinary affection; but if you please to do the duty of a true and loyal mistress, and to give up yourself, body and heart, to me, who will be, as I have been your most loyal servant (if your rigour does not forbid me) I promise you that not only the name shall be given you, but also that I will take you for my mistress, casting off all others that are in competition with you, out of my thoughts and affection, and serving you only. I beg you to give an intire answer to this my rude letter, that I may know on what and how far I may depend. But, if it does not please you to answer me in writing, let me know some place, where I may have it by word of mouth, and I will go thither with all my heart. No more for fear of tiring you. Written by the hand of him, who would willingly remain yours.

H. Rex

LETTER V

For a present so valuable that nothing could be more (considering the whole of it) I return you my most hearty thanks, not only on account of the costly diamond, and the ship in which the solitary damsel is tossed about ; but chiefly for the fine interpretation and too humble submission which your goodness hath made to me. For I think it would be very difficult for me to find an occasion to deserve it, if I was not afflicted by your great humanity and favour, which I have sought, do seek, and will always seek to preserve by all the services in my power ; and this is my firm intention and hope, according to the motto, *Aut illic aut nullibi* (either here or nowhere). The demonstrations of your affection are such, the fine thoughts of your letter so cordially expressed that they oblige me for ever to honour, love and serve you sincerely, beseeching you to continue in the same firm and constant purpose ; and assuring you, that, on my part, I will not only make you a suitable return, but out-do you in loyalty of heart if it be possible. I desire you also, that, if at any time before this I have in any sort offended you, you would give me the same absolution which you ask, assuring you, that hereafter my heart shall be dedicated to you alone, I with my body was so too, God can do it, if he pleases ; to whom I pray once a day for that end ; hoping that at length my prayers will be heard. I wish the time may be short, but I shall think it long, till we shall see one another. Written by the hand of the secretary, who in heart, body, and will, is

Your loyal and most assured servant

H. no other (AB) seeks Rex

LETTER VI

The reasonable request of your last letter, with the pleasure I also take to know them, causes me to send you now this news. The legat, which we most desire, arrived at Paris on Sunday or Monday last past; so that I trust, by the next Monday, to hear of his arrival at Calais: and then, I trust, within a while after, to enjoy that which I have so longed for, to God's pleasure, and our both comforts. No more to you, at this present, mine awne darling, for lake of time; but that I would you were in myne arms, or I in yours; for I think it long since I kyset you. Written after the killing of an hart, at XI of the clock; minding with God's grace tomorrow, mightily tymely to kill another, by the hand of him, which I trust shortly shall be yours.

Henry R.

LETTER VII

Darling, though I have scant leisure, yet, remembering my promise, I thought it convenient to certify you breevly, in what case our affairs stand. As touching a lodging for you, we have gotten wone, by my lord cardinal's means, the like whereof could not have been found hereabouts for all causes, as this bearer shall more shew you. At touching our other affairs, I ensure you there can be no more done, or more diligence used, nor all manner of dangers better both foreseen and provided for, so that I trust it shall be hereafter to both our comforts, the specialities whereof were both too long to be writtne, and hardly by messenger to be declared. Wherefore till you repair hydder, I keep something in store, trusting it shall not be long to. For I have caused my lord, your father, to make his provisions with speed. And thus, for lake of tyme, darling, I make an end of my letter, writeing with the hand of him, which I would were yours.

H. R.

Myne. I have good cardinall I comande me unto you
 w^t all my hast and thynke now for the grette payne
 and laborte that you do ~~lente~~ take in my byfynes and malice
 dofyng not yow that now know, ihe will still syd them
 to take from me pastyme and confort to the intente you may
 the lenger endure to ffe b^r for allways payng can not
 be induerd. Sylly you have of suffisynge alredy done
 maters betw^t off thys syde the see and by contynct in my
 oppygnynge hysself or not syng can be adyd redyctholles according
 to your desyre I do send yow myne oppygnynge by thys befor
 the reformation wheroff I do remyte to you and the
 remenant off our frndys collers wherof I am sure will
 suffisantly loke on hym for to syng the mater that s^r
 mylly am syng brought anfreak off I am well contented
 to rehat ordre so evez you do take in att. this p[re]cure
 my wryff hatynge desyred me to make that myt pastyr
 recymdations to you as to hym that he were
 very well and betw^t syng and I wold be lind for hym
 when you wryll respyre to syng no more to you
 att thys tyme but that myt chichester stufit wchell
 sydisposynt on se cronyngs of l. iherne intended þys
 wrytyng to the hand off your currit m^r *(Signature)*

To my liden radine.

LETTER VIII

I I I I

Though it does not belong to a gentleman to take his lady in the place of a servant, however, in following your desires, I willingly grant it, that so you may be more agreeably in the place that you yourself have chosen, than you have been in that which I gave you. I shall be heartily obliged to you, if you please to have some remembrance of me. 6. N. R.
i. de R. O. M. V. E. Z.

Henry Rex

LETTER IX

The cause of my writeing at this time (good sweetheart) is wonly to understand off your good health and prosperity, whereof to know I would be as glad in manner myne awne, praying God, that and it be his pleasure, to send us shortly togydder, for I promise you I long for it, howbeit, trust it shall not be long too ; and seeing my darling is absent, I can no less do, than to send her some flesh representing my name, which is hart's fleshe for Henry, prognosticating, that hereafter, God willing, you must enjoy some of mine, which if he pleased I wolde were now. As touching your sister's matter, I have caused Walter Welche to write to my lord mine mind therein, whereby I trust that Eve shall not have power to deceave Adam. For surely, whatsoever is said, it cannot so stand with his honour, but that he must needs take her his natural daughter now in her extream necessity. No more to you at this time, mine own darling, but that with a wishe I would we were togydder one evening with the hand of your

H. R.

LETTER X



Although, my mistress, you have not been pleased
remember the promise which you made me when I was last
with you which was, that I should hear news of you, and have
an answer to my last letter; yet I think it belongs to a true
servant (since otherwise he can know nothing) to send to
enquire of his mistress's health; and, for to acquit myself of
the office of a true servant, I send you this letter begging you
to give me an account of the state you are in, which I pray
God may continue as long in prosperity, as I with my own;
and, that you may the oftener remember me, I send you by
this bearer, a buck killed late last night by my hand, hoping,
when you eat of it, you will think on the hunter; and thus
for want of more room I will make an end of my letter.
Written by the hand of your servant, who often wishes you
in your brother's room.

H. Rex

LETTER XI

The approach of the time, which I have so long expected, rejoices me so much, that it seems almost ready come. However, the entire accomplishment cannot be till the two persons meet, which meeting is more desired by me than any thing in this world ; for what joy can be greater upon earth, than to have the company of her who is my dearest friend ? Knowing likewise that she does the same on her part, the thinking on which gives great pleasure. You may judge what an effect the presence of that person must have on me, whose absence has made a greater wound in my heart than either words or writing can express, and which nothing can cure, but her return ; I beg you, dear mistress, to tell your father from me, that I desire him to hasten the appointment by two days, that he may be in court before the old term, or at farthest on the day prefixed ; for otherwise I shall think, he will not do the lover's turn, as he said he would, nor answer my expectation. No more at present, for want of time ; hoping shortly that by word of mouth I shall tell you the rest of my sufferings from your absence. Written by the hand of the secretary, who wishes himself at present privately with you, and who is, and always will be,

Your royal and most assured servant
H. no other (AB) seeks Rex

LETTER XII

There came to me in the night the most afflicting news possible. For I have reason to grieve upon three accounts. First, because I heard of the sickness of my mistress, whom I esteem more than all the world, whose health I desire as much as my own, and the half of whose sickness I would willingly bear to have her cured. Secondly, because I fear I shall suffer yet longer that tedious absence which has hitherto given me all possible uneasiness, and, as far as I can judge, is like to give me more. I pray God he would deliver me from so troublesome a tormentor. The third reason is, because the physician, in whom I trust most, is absent at present, when he could do me the greatest pleasure. For I should hope by him, and his means, to obtain one of my principal joys in this world, that is, my mistress cured ; however, in default of him, I send you the second, and the only one left, praying God that he may soon make you well, and then I shall love him more than ever. I beseech you to be governed by his advices with relation to your illness ; by your doing which I hope shortly to see you again, which will be to me a greater cordial than all the precious stones in the world. Written by the secretary who is, and always will be

Your loyal and most assured servant

H. (AB) R.

LETTER XIII

Since your last letters, myne awne darling, Walter Welche, Master Brown, John Carre, Yrion of Brearton, John Cocke, the pothecary, be fallen of the swett in this house, and thenkyed be God all well recovered, so that as yet the plague is not fully ceased here; but I trust shortly it shall by the mercy of God; the rest of us yet be well, and I trust shall pass it, either not to have it, or at least as easily as the rest have don. As touching the matter of Wylton, my lord cardinal hath had the nunys before him, and examined them, Master Bell being present, which hath certified me that for a truth, that she hath confessed herself (which we would have had abbesse) to have had two children by two sundry priests; and, furder, since hath been keepeyd by a servant of the Lord Broke, that was, and that not long ago. Wherefor I would not for all the world clog your conscience nor mine to make her ruler of a house which is of so ungodly demeanour; nor I trust you would not, that neither for brother nor sister I should so destain mine honour or conscience; and as touching the pryoresse, or Dame Ellenor's eldest sister, though there is not any evident case proved against them, and that the pryoresse is so old, that of many years she could not be as she was named; yet notwithstanding, to do you pleasure, I have done that neither of them shall have it, but that some other and good and well disposed woman shall have it; whereby the house shall be the better reformed (whereof, I ensure you, it had much need) and God much the better served; as touching abode at Hever, do therein as best shall you like; for you know best what aire doth best for you; but I would it were come thereto (if it pleased God) that neither of us need care for that, for I ensure you I think it long. Suche is fallen sick of the swett, and therfor I send you this bearer, because I think you long to hear tydings from us, as we do in likewise from you. Writeing with the hand.

De votre seul

(of yours only)

H. R.

LETTER XIV



Darling, these shall be only to advertise you, that this bearer, and his fellow, be dispatched with as many things to compass our matter, and to bring it to pass as our wits could imagine or devise, which brought to pass, as I trust by their diligence, it shall be, shortly you and I shall have our desired end, which should be more to my heart's ease, and more quietness to my minde, than any other thing in this world, as with God's grace shortly I trust shall be proved, but not so soon as I would it were, yet I will assure you there shall be no tyme lost that may be won, and further cannot be done, for *ultra posse non est esse*: keep him not too long with you, but desire him for your sake to make the more speed, for, the sooner we shall have word from him, the sooner shall our matter come to passe; and thus, upon trust of your short repair to London, I make an end of my letter, mine awne sweetheart. Writne with the hand of him which desireth as much to be yours, as you do to have him.

H. R.

LETTER XV

Darling, I heartily recommend me to you, ascertaining you, that I am a little perplexed with such things as your brother shall on my part declare unto you, to whom I pray you give full credence, for it were too long to write. In my last letters I writ to you that I trusted shortly to see you, which is better known at London than with any that is about me, whereof I not a little merelle but lake of discreet handling must needs be the cause thereof. No more to you at this time, but that I trust shortly, our meeting shall not depend upon other men's light handlings but upon your awne. Writne with the hand of him that longeth to be yours.

H. R.

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JANE SEYMOUR
(From the original of Holbein)

LETTER XVI

A A A A

Myne awne sweetheart, this shall be to advertise you of the great ellingness that I find here since your departing, for I assure you, methinketh the tyme longer since your departing now last then I was wont to do a whole fortnight; I think your kindness and my fervence of love causeth it, for otherwise I would not thought it possible, that for so little a while it should have grieved me, but now that I am coming towards you, methinketh my pains been half released, and also I am right well comforted, insomuch that my book maketh substantially for my matter, in writing whereof I have spent above 1111 hours this day, which caused me now to write the shorter letter to you at this tyme, because of same Payne in my head, wishing myself (especially an evening) in my sweetheart's armes whose piety ducky I trust shortly to kysse. Writtne with the hand of him that was, is, and shall be yours by his will.

Pretty,

H. R.

LETTER XVII

To informe you what joye it is to me to understand of your conformableness with reasone, and of the suppressing of your inulite and vain thoughts and fantacies with the bridle of reasone, I assure you all the good of this world could not counterpoise for my satisfaction the knowledge and certainty thereof; wherefore, good sweetheart, continue the same not only in this, but in all your doings hereafter, for thereby shall come both to you and me the greatest quietnesse that may be in this world. The cause why this bearer stayeth so long, is the business that I have had to dresse up geer for you, which I trust ere long to see you occupye, and then I trust to occupye yours, which shall be recompence enough to me for all my pains and labours. The unfayned sickness of this well-willing legate doth somewhat retard his accesse to your person, but I trust veryly, when God shall send him health, he will with diligence recompense his demure, for I know well where he hath said (lamenting the saying, and brute (Noyse) that he shall be thought imperial) that it shall be well known in this matter, that he is not imperial. And this for lake of tyme, farewell. Writtne with the hand which faine would be yours, and so is the heart.

H. R.

*Two Letters from ANNE BOLEYN
to CARDINAL WOLSEY*

LETTER I



My lord, in my most humble wise that my heart can think, I desire you to pardon me that I am so bold, to trouble you with my simple and rude writing, esteeming it to proceed from her, that is much desirous to know that your grace does well, as I perceive by this bearer that you do. The which I pray God long to continue, as I am most bound to pray; for I do know the great pains and troubles that you have taken for me, both day and night, is never like to be recompenced on my part, but lonely in loving you, next unto the king's grace, above all creatures living. And I do not doubt, but the daily proof of my deeds shall manifestly declare and affirm my writing to be true, and I do trust you do think the same. My lord, I do assure you, I do long to hear from you news of the legate; for I do hope, and they come from you, they shall be very good, and I am sure you desire it as much as I, and more, and it were possible, as I know it is not; and thus, remaining in a steadfast hope, I make an end of my letter, written with the hand of her that is most bound to be.

Postscript by King Henry

The writer of this letter would not cease till she had caused me likewise to set to my hand; desiring you, though it be short, to take it in good part. I ensure you, there is neither of us, but that greatly desireth to see you, and much more joyous to hear that you have escaped this plague so well, and trusting the fury thereof to be passed, especially with them that keepeth good diet, as I trust you do. The not hearing of the legate's arrival in France, causeth us some-

what to muse ; notwithstanding, we trust by your diligence and vigilancy (with the assistance of Almighty God) shortly to be eased out of that trouble. No more to you at this time ; but that I pray God send you as good health prosperity, as the writer would.

By your loving sovereign and friend
HENRY R.

Your humble servant

ANNE BOLEYN

LETTER II

My lord, in my most humble wise that my poor heart can think, I do thank your grace for your kind letter, and for your rich and goodly present, the which I shall never be able to deserve without your help, of the which I have hitherto had so great plenty that, all the days of my life, I am most bound, of all creatures, next the king's grace, to love and serve your grace; of the which, I beseech you, never to doubt, that ever I shall vary from this thought as long as any breath is in my body. And, as touching your grace's trouble with the sweat, I thank our lord, that them I desired and prayed for are escaped, and that is the king and you; not doubting but that God has preserved you both for great causes known only to his high wisdom. And as for the coming of the legate, I desire that much; and, if it be God's pleasure, I pray him to send this matter shortly to a good end, and then I trust, my lord, to recompence part of your great pains. In the which, I must require you, in the mean time, to accept my good will in the stead of the power, the which must proceed partly from you, as our Lord knoweth; to whom I beseech to send you long life, with continuance in honour. Written with the hand of her that is most bound to be

Your humble and obedient servant

ANNE BOLEYN

ANNE BOLEYN'S *Last Letter to
King HENRY*

SIR

Your grace's displeasure, and my imprisonment, are things so strange unto me, as what to write, or what to excuse, I am altogether ignorant. Whereas you send unto me (willing me to confess a truth, and so obtain your favour) by such an one whom you know to be mine antient professed enemy; I no sooner received this message by him, than I rightly conceived your meaning; and if, as you say, Confessing a truth indeed may procure my safety, I shall with all willingness and duty perform your command.

But let not your grace ever imagine that your poor wife will ever be brought to acknowledge a fault, where not so much as a thought thereof preceded. And to speak a truth, never prince had wife more loyal in all duty, and in all true affection, than you have ever found in Anne Boleyn, with which name and place I could willingly have contented myself, if God and your grace's pleasure had been so pleased. Neither did I at any time so far forget myself in my exaltation, or received queenship, but that I always looked for such an alteration as now I find; for the ground of my preferment being on no surer foundation than your grace's fancy, the least alteration, I knew, was fit and sufficient to draw that fancy to some other subject. You have chosen me from a low estate to be your queen and companion, far beyond my desert or desire. If then, you found me worthy of such honour, good your grace let not any light fancy, or bad counsel of mine enemies, withdraw your princely favour from me; neither let that stain, that unworthy stain of a disloyal heart, towards your good grace, ever cast so foul a blot on your most dutiful wife, and the infant princess, your daughter; try me, good king, but let me have a lawful trial,

and let not my sworn enemies sit as my accusers and judges ; yea, let me receive an open trial, for my truth shall fear no open shame ; then shall you see, either mine innocency cleared, your suspicion and conscience satisfied, the ignominy and slander of the world stopped, or my guilt openly declared. So that, whatsoever God or you may determine of me, your grace may be freed from an open censure ; and mine offence being so lawfully proved, your grace is at liberty, both before God and man, not only to execute worthy punishment on me as an unlawful wife, but to follow your affection already settled on that party, for whose sake I am now as I am, whose name I could some good while since have pointed unto ; your grace being not ignorant of my suspicion therein.

But, if you have already determined of me, and that only my death, but an infamous slander must bring you the enjoying of your desired happiness ; then I desire of God, that he will pardon your great sin therein, and likewise mine enemies, the instruments thereof ; and that he will not call you to a strict account for your unprincely and cruel usage of me, at his general judgment-seat, where both you and myself must shortly appear, and in whose judgment, I doubt not (whatsoever the world may think of me), mine innocence shall be openly known, and sufficiently cleared.

My last and only request shall be, that myself may only bear the burthen of your grace's displeasure, and that it may not touch the innocent souls of those poor gentlemen, who, as I understand, are likewise in strait imprisonment for my sake. If ever I have found favour in your sight ; if ever the name of Anne Boleyn hath been pleasing in your ears, then let me obtain this request, and I will so leave to trouble your grace any further, with mine earnest prayers to the Trinity to have your grace in his good keeping, and to direct you in all your actions. From my doleful prison in the Tower, this sixth of May.

Your most loyal and ever faithful wife

ANNE BOLEYN

Letter from King HENRY VIII
to JANE SEYMOUR

(Written while Anne Boleyn was still his wife)

MY DEAR FRIEND AND MISTRESS

The bearer of these few lines from thy entirely devoted servant will deliver into thy fair hands a token of my true affection for thee, hoping you will keep it for ever in your sincere love for me. Advertising you that there is a ballad made lately of great derision against us, which if it go much abroad and is seen by you, I pray you to pay no manner of regard to it. I am not at present informed who is the setter forth of this malignant writing but if he is found he shall be straitly punished for it. For the things ye lacked I have minded my lord to supply them to you as soon as he can buy them. This hoping shortly to receive you in these arms, I end for the present.

Your own loving servant and sovereign

H. R.

